

**GUIDELINES FOR IEP TEAMS:
Assigning Students with IEPs to State Tests
(ASIST)**

Developed in Collaboration:

Bureau of Special Education

and

Bureau of Assessment and Accountability

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IEP Team Recommendations for Participation in PA State Assessments

Introduction:

There are three basic reasons for including all students with disabilities in State assessment and accountability systems. First, it is established law. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Title I of the ESEA each require all students with disabilities to be included in State assessment systems. In addition, the prohibition against exclusion from participation or denial of benefits to, or discrimination against, individuals with disabilities contained in section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act applies to State assessment and accountability systems. ESEA (section 1111(b)(2)) further requires that assessment results for all students (and students in specified subgroups, including students with disabilities) who have been enrolled in a school for a full academic year be used in calculating AYP for the school, and that the assessment results of all students who have been in a local educational agency (LEA) for a full academic year be used in calculating AYP for the LEA and the State.

Second, students with disabilities benefit instructionally from participating in State and district-wide assessments. Including students with disabilities in accountability systems has resulted in parents, teachers and administrators paying more attention to grade-level standards and ensuring that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum and have an opportunity to learn grade-level content.

Third, to ensure that appropriate resources are dedicated to helping students with disabilities succeed, appropriate measurement of their achievement needs to be part of the accountability system. By including all students in State accountability systems, schools pay attention to the performance and progress of *all* students; educating students with disabilities becomes a shared responsibility of both general and special education teachers.

In Pennsylvania, there are five options for test participation of students with disabilities:

1. The PSSA
2. The PSSA with accommodations
3. The PSSA-Modified (Reading and Math grades 4-8, 11; Science grades 8, 11)
4. The PSSA-Modified with accommodations (Reading and Math grades 4-8, 11; Science grades 8, 11)
5. The PASA

IEP Team Recommendations for Participation in PA State Assessments

I. Important considerations:

1. These decisions apply *ONLY* to students with disabilities whose disability requires specially designed instruction. That is, only students with IEPs; *NOT* students with 504 Plans.
2. *MOST* students with IEPs should aim for taking the PSSA with or without accommodations. The alternate assessment options are intended only for *VERY FEW* students with IEPs.
3. The PSSA-M is a *GRADE LEVEL* test. It can be less cognitively complex and shorter than the PSSA; however, students must still perform grade level skills in Math, Reading and Science.
4. Unlike assignment to the PASA, which requires students to take the PASA version of all subject area tests, assignment to the PSSA-M is *SUBJECT SPECIFIC*. For example, IEP teams might decide that a student take the PSSA-M Math test and the PSSA-M Science test with or without accommodations but the student will take the standard PSSA Reading test (with or without accommodations).
5. Recommendations for assessment assignment occur YEARLY. The decision about which statewide accountability assessment the student will take rests solely with the IEP team. Students with disabilities must participate in the statewide accountability assessment but assignment to the assessment may change from year to year, based on the student's past performance and IEP team decisions.

II. Consequences of test assignment decisions:

1. Student Consequences

There are *NO* consequences *for the student* taking an alternate assessment

- a. No consequences with respect to test score/performance level related to taking the test with allowable accommodations
- b. No consequences with respect to high school graduation
- c. No consequences with respect to eligibility for post-secondary education (community college; state college system)
- d. No consequences with respect to grade promotion/retention
- e. No consequences with respect to rewards for proficient or advanced performance on an alternate as opposed to the regular assessment

2. School/ District Consequences

There *ARE* consequences *for the school or district* when IEP teams assign students to an alternate assessment

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- a. Although there is no limit on the number of students with IEPs who may take the PSSA-M, no more than 2% of the Advanced/Proficient scores in a district grade span used for calculating AYP may come from the modified assessment. If an LEA exceeds the 2% cap, the LEA is provided the opportunity to determine which students will be counted as *not Proficient* for purposes of AYP calculation only.
- b. Although there is no limit on the number of students with IEPs who may take the PASA, no more than 1% of the Advanced/Proficient scores in a district grade span used for calculating AYP may come from the modified assessment. If an LEA exceeds the 1% cap, the LEA is provided the opportunity to determine which students will be counted as *not Proficient* for purposes of AYP calculation only.
- c. Students with IEPs who score in the proficient range on the regular PSSA (with or without accommodations) are counted as *proficient* in the calculation of AYP. This is in addition to the students counted as proficient (up to 3% of students assessed at a grade span) on the alternate assessments. Schools or districts would benefit from assigning a LIMITED number of students to alternate assessments and having as many students with IEPs as possible take and score proficient on the regular PSSA. Over assigning students to alternate assessments may actually result in fewer students who are counted as proficient.

III. PSSA-M Participation Decision-Making Guidelines

It is important that IEP teams consider the positive impact on students, their families, and their teachers of setting high expectations for achievement. Most students with IEPs should be assigned to take the standard PSSA. In deciding whether a particular student should be assigned to the PSSA-M, the IEP team MUST take into account:

1. Opportunity to Learn Grade Level Content
 - ALL students should have the opportunity to learn grade level academic content. Evidence for opportunity to learn includes:
 - attendance data (the student must have been present for instruction);
 - grade-level standards-aligned IEP goals;
 - instructional accommodations and/or modifications;
 - intensive research-based interventions
2. Academic Achievement and Progress
 - Academic achievement and progress of ALL students should be closely monitored. Students eligible to take the PSSA-M should demonstrate:
 - a disability that precludes grade level proficiency despite intensive intervention/instruction
 - past academic progress that suggests that achieving grade level proficiency within one year is unlikely even with significant growth

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After thoughtfully reviewing the aforementioned considerations, consequences, and data sources for EACH student with an IEP, IEP teams should sequentially and systematically work through the PSSA-M Participation Decision Framework to recommend the appropriate state test assignment.

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Decision Guidelines for Assignment to PSSA-M

- A student must meet 4 out of 4 criteria in order for an IEP team to recommend participation in the PSSA-Modified Math or PSSA-M Reading.
- If a student does not meet 4 out of 4 criteria for Math or Reading, IEP teams may consider recommending participation in the PSSA with accommodations.
- Given that a student's ability to access grade level science content may be significantly impacted by his/her math or reading ability, IEP teams may consider recommending participation in the PSSA-M Science if the student meets 4 out of 4 criteria for PSSA-M Math or PSSA-M Reading participation.
- Potential Evidence may include what is listed below but is not limited to those listed.

Criteria for PSSA-M Math and PSSA-M Reading Participation

Criteria	Guideline	Potential Evidence	Decision-Math		Decision-Reading	
			YES	NO	YES	NO
1. Ineligible for the PASA	Students considered for the PSSA-M <i>do not</i> have significant cognitive disabilities and <i>should not be</i> held to <u>alternate achievement standards</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP • PASA Guidelines for Participation 				
2. Standards-Aligned Grade Level Instruction	All students considered for the PSSA-M must have a grade level standards-aligned IEP that clearly documents that the student requires significant instructional accommodations and/or modifications to successfully access grade level content	In applicable subject area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards-aligned IEP Goals • SDI documentation • Present levels documentation • Instructional accommodations and modification documentation/evidence 				
3. Persistent academic difficulties	Students considered for the PSSA-M have persistent academic difficulties despite having received intensive research-based interventions	In applicable subject area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress monitoring data (CBM, CBA) • Intervention documentation 				

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Decision Guidelines for Assignment to PSSA-M

4. Lack of academic progress or growth	Students considered for the PSSA-M have established patterns of significantly low performance on multiple valid measures that indicates that <i>even if</i> significant growth occurs, achievement of grade level proficiency is unlikely	<p>In applicable subject area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State level assessment data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Patterns of Below Basic performance on the PSSA ○ PVAAS projection to proficiency of less than 10% • District/School level assessment data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Performance well below grade level on a norm-referenced achievement test • Grade level assessment data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Well below average performance on progress monitoring or other classroom assessment data 				
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- Did the student meet 4/4 criteria for participation in the PSSA-M Math? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Did the student meet 4/4 criteria for participation in the PSSA-M Reading? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Complete page 4 of the IEP form to indicate resulting assessment assignments.

Criteria for PSSA-M Science Participation

- Did the student meet 4/4 criteria for participation in the PSSA-Math? ☐ YES ☐ NO
 - If YES...

Did the review of the guidelines and academic evidence for Math suggest that the student's math skills negatively impact his/her learning of science content, and he/she should therefore also participate in the PSSA-M Science test? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Did the student meet 4/4 criteria for participation in the PSSA-Reading? ☐ YES ☐ NO
 - If YES...

Did the review of the guidelines and academic evidence for Reading suggest that the student's reading skills negatively impact his/her learning of science content, and should he/she therefore also participate in the PSSA-M Science test? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Complete page 4 of the IEP form to indicate resulting assessment assignment.

IEP Team Recommendations for Participation in PA State Assessments

Decision Guidelines for Assignment to PASA

IV. Participation Guidelines for PASA

The PASA is appropriate for students who have significant cognitive disabilities and who require intensive instruction and extensive support in order to perform and/or participate meaningfully and productively in the everyday activities of integrated school, home, community, and work environments. These students require substantial modifications of the general education curriculum as well as instruction in areas not presently assessed by the PSSA.

The following questions should guide IEP teams in their decision-making regarding the PASA.

1. By September 1 of the school year in which this IEP will be operative, will the student be in grade 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, or 11?	Yes	No
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AND

2. Does the student have significant cognitive disabilities?	Yes	No
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AND

3. Does the student require intensive instruction to learn?	Yes	No
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AND

4. Does the student require extensive adaptation and support in order to perform and/or participate meaningfully and productively in the everyday life activities of integrated school, home, community, and work environments?	Yes	No
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AND

5. Does the student require substantial modifications of the general education curriculum?	Yes	No
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AND

6. Does the student's participation in the general education curriculum differ substantially in form and/or substance from that of most other students (i.e., different objectives, materials, or activities)?	Yes	No
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If the answer was “Yes” to all of these questions, it would be appropriate for the IEP team to consider assigning the student to the **Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA)**. If the answer was “No” to any of the above questions, the **PASA** is *not* the appropriate statewide assessment for the student.

Decision Guidelines for Assignment to PASA

V. Contacts

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